

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6218

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: JOINT COMMISSION AND SUBCOMMISSIONS

1. IN ITS ROLE AS COORDINATOR FOR JOINT COMMISSION MATTERS, THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (NAZARETH) ON JAN 9 RAISED WITH THE ECONOMIC COUNSELOR THREE QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE COMING MEETINGS.

2. FIRST, THE GOI CONSIDERED THERE WAS A SUBSTANTIAL OVERLAP BETWEEN THE SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL SUBCOMMISSIONS. AFTER CONSIDERATION AT A HIGH LEVEL THE GOI HAS DECIDED THAT SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS SUCH AS JOINT RESEARCH WHICH WERE HANDLED BY INDIAN UNIVERSITIES COME WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND THE SUBCOMMISSION ON EDUCATION AND CULTURE. THE GOI NOTED THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON WITH A SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND ON THE US PANEL OF THE SUBCOMMISSION. THE GOI HAS INSTRUCTED THE INDIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO ASK THE USG TO ADD MORE SCIENTISTS TO THE US TEAM.

3. COMMENT: WE POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR US TO DO THIS SINCE THE US MEMBERSHIP HAS ALREADY BEEN ANNOUNCED. NAZARETH SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THIS AND THOUGHT SOME CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP MIGHT BE WORKED OUT PRIOR TO THE SECOND MEETING OF THE SUBCOMMISSION. THIS INDIAN REQUEST APPEARS TO REFLECT THE WORKING OUT OF A MAJOR JURISDICTIONAL DISPUTE (WE
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UNDERSTAND THE DECISION IS BEING APPEALED) REGARDING CONTROL

OF SCIENCE IN THE GOI. THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY HAS IN PART LOST OUT TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WHICH WILL HAVE JURISDICTION OVER SCIENCE IN UNIVERSITIES. THE MINISTRY WILL INSIST ON CONDUCTING ITS OWN REVIEW OF JOINT RESEARCH PROJECTS IN ADDITION TO THAT OF THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION. THUS THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION WILL RETAIN SOME INFLUENCE OVER GOI SCIENCE POLICY. THIS IS OF SOME SIGNIFICANCE TO THE US SINCE THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IS LARGELY STAFFED BY PRAGMATIC AMERICAN-TRAINED SCIENTISTS WHO STRONGLY SUPPORT COOPERATION WITH THE US. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IS INFLUENCED BY THE LEFTIST IDEOLOGY OF ITS MINISTER, NURUL HASAN, AND HAS A MUCH MORE CAUTIOUS RECORD IN REGARD TO COOPERATION WITH THE US GOVERNMENT AND US SCHOLARS. WE WOULD GREATLY PREFER THAT THE SUBCOMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGE ALL SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION BUT WE PROBABLY HAVE NO CHOICE BUT ULTIMATELY TO MAKE SOME GESTURE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE GOI REQUEST. WE WILL THEN HAVE TO LOOK CAREFULLY TO COORDINATION BETWEEN THE SUBCOMMISSIONS ON EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY. END COMMENT.

4. NAZARETH ALSO PROPOSED THAT THE SUBCOMMISSION ON EDUCATION AND CULTURE CONSIDER MEASURES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF NATIONAL IMAGES IN THE RESPECTIVE NEWSPAPERS OF INDIA AND THE US. HE SAID THAT THE GOI STRONGLY BELIEVED THAT THE TWO GOVERNMENTS COULD DO MORE THROUGH PRESS BRIEFINGS TO IMPROVE EACH OTHER'S IMAGES.

5. COMMENT. THIS ITEM TROUBLES US GREATLY, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT IT HAS BEEN INSPIRED FROM HIGH LEVELS IN THE GOI. WE KNOW THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS BEEN STUNG BY RECENT SEVERE CRITICISM OF HER AND HER GOVERNMENT IN THE US PRESS AND THAT SHE BELIEVES THE US GOVERNMENT COULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. THERE HAS ALSO BEEN SOME TALK IN THE PRESS AND PARLIAMENT ABOUT WHETHER THE GOI IS DOING ITS INFORMATION JOB ADEQUATELY IN THE WEST. PRESSURES HAVE BEEN APPLIED TO THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT TO BE APPLIED TO US. THE EMBASSY HAS ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS TRIED TO POINT OUT TO INDIAN OFFICIALS THAT THERE IS NO WAY

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THE US GOVERNMENT CAN BRIEF OR OTHERWISE INFLUENCE THE US PRESS TO CAUSE IT TO CHANGE ITS VIEW ON INDIA. NONETHELESS, THE GOI KEEPS COMING BACK TO US WITH THIS PROPOSAL THAT THE SUBCOMMISSION CONSIDER WHAT THE US CAN DO TO ALTER INDIA'S IMAGE. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO HELP THE INDIANS ON THIS ITEM AND SINCE THEY ATTACH IMPORTANCE TO IT THE RESULT MAY BE THAT THEY WILL CONSIDER THE SUBCOMMISSION MEETING A FAILURE. WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOI SHOULD BE MADE WELL AWARE BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMISSION MEETING THAT THERE IS LITTLE IF ANYTHING WE CAN DO TO HELP THEM AND RECOMMEND THE DEPARTMENT MAKE THIS ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO THE INDIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. WHOEVER IS PUSHING THIS AS AN AGENDA ITEM IN THE GOI IS OBVIOUSLY BADLY INFORMED ABOUT THE FUNCTION OF THE US PRESS. END COMMENT.

6. FINALLY, NAZARETH SAID THE GOI WAS DISTURBED THAT THE IMPRESSION HAD BEEN GIVEN DAT THE MEETING BETWEEN SECRETARY KISSINGER AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER LAST OCTOBER HAD CONSTITUTED THE FIRST MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMISSION. THE GOI POSITION, ON THE CONTRARY, WAS THAT THE 1975 MEETING WOULD BE THE FIRST MEETING.

7. COMMENT: THIS HAS BEEN A CURIOUS ELEMENT OF GOI THEOLOGY WHICH WE DEBATED DURING THE LAST DAYS BEFORE THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. FOR SOME REASON THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS CONSIDERED THAT THE FIRST MEETING OF THE COMMISSION SHOULD BE HELD ONLY WHEN THE WORK OF THE SUBCOMMISSIONS COULD BE REVIEWED AND THAT THE SIGNING CEREMONY AND FOLLOWING DISCUSSION LAST OCTOBER SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED THE FIRST MEETING. HOWEVER, SOMETHING WENT WRONG AT THE TIME AND APPARENTLY THE GOI BRIEFED ITS OWN PRESS THAT THE SIGNING CEREMONY HAD BEEN THE FIRST MEETING. NOW THEY WANT TO GET BACK TO THE ORIGINAL IDEA. IT SEEMS OF NO CONSEQUENCE TO US WHICH WAY WE GO AND WE RECOMMEND THEREFORE THAT WE ACCEPT THE INDIAN POSITION.

8. CONSIDERING THE SUBCOMMISSION MEETINGS GENERALLY, WE ARE IMPRESSED BY HOW MUCH THE GOI WANTS TO GET OUT OF THEM (E.G. A BETTER IMAGE, A GUARANTEE FOR A PHOSPHATE PLANT, MORE SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE) AND HOW DIFFICULT IT MAY BE FOR US TO DELIVER. CONSIDERING THAT THE MAJOR ATTENTION OF THE GOI DURING THE COMING WEEKS WILL BE ON CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICS AND A POSSIBLE SNAP ELECTION AND THAT IT MAY BE CONVENIENT DURING THIS TIME TO TAKE OUT AFTER THE WESTERN NATIONS AND IN PARTICULAR THE US, IT WOULD BE WELL THAT WE DO OUR BEST TO INSURE THAT THERE WILL BE NO DISAPPOINTING SURPRISES FOR THE INDIANS AT THE SUBCOMMISSION MEETINGS. OUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE PL480 MATTER UNDERLINES OUR CONCERN. SCHNEIDER

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